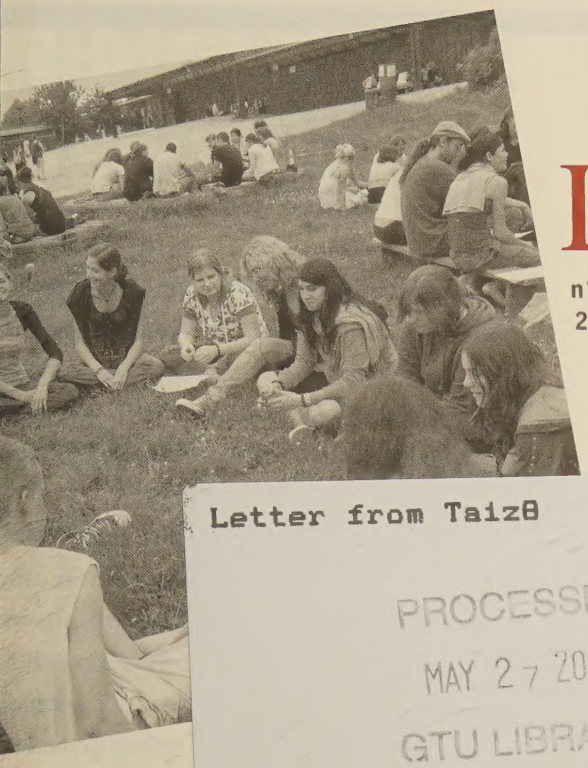


Lettre from Taizé

n° 267 Quarterly 0,75 €
2010/2

Letter from Taizé

PROCESSED
MAY 27 2010
GTU LIBRARY

Faith Received, Faith Shared

Throughout the year 2010, we are reflecting on the various sections of the *Letter from China* written by Brother Alois. In this second issue, young people writing from different countries echo the parts of the letter relating to the transmission of faith.

While faith seems to be vanishing in many societies, a spiritual longing is being reborn. We need to discover the right words, simple ones, to make accessible to others the faith that gives us life. (*Letter from China*)

Isabelle is a young professional woman in the region of Lyons. She writes:

Asserting myself means saying who I am, without asking the other person to be like me. If I tell someone else what my faith is, that is not so that they may have the same faith that I have, but so that they may know mine. If they do not feel that I want to change them, then they feel free. Then they can listen to me as I am.

When should I tell someone that I am a Christian? My own choice is never to do so at first, because my experience has taught me that unfortunately many believers, when they express their faith, do not let those to whom they are speaking remain free. Nowadays there is a fear that believers are trying to convert atheists. This is not my goal and I do not want the other person to run away because they are afraid that I am trying to convert them. Since people first know who I am and that I have not tried previously to convert them, then they are willing to have a dialogue. They sometimes have questions that cause me to go forward on my faith journey.

How do I stand up for my faith? First, I often wait until a question comes up. What I prefer is when people ask me: how do you always manage to see the positive side of things? Or: where do you find this energy? Sometimes it is by talking about something that I did, like a trip to Poland with the Taizé Community. I do not say too much; if there are questions, I answer out of my faith experience. I never make big speeches about faith because I do not feel capable enough from a theological perspective. For technical questions I often answer: "If God exists, then he is able to do anything, otherwise he is not God. I believe he exists. You do not have to agree with me." This avoids focusing on details, but allows me to talk more about what I want to when I share this part of myself: the happiness I have in believing in God, the way it helps me go forward each day. I also often give this answer to skeptics: "You know, even if God does not exist, faith will have only brought me happiness—reflections, meetings, joys, plans…."

Standing up for my faith for me does not mean shouting in the street to everybody; it means living it every day. It also means being able to be discreet, if you feel that the other person is not ready to encounter that part of you. It is up to us to be patient and slowly get to know them, so that they can be ready to know us in our full identity.

Many children grow up without anyone ever telling them that God loves them. What young people will walk alongside one or more of them on the path of faith? (*Letter from China*)

From Jano and Peter, a young Slovakian couple:

One day someone asked me to give a hand in a non-profit corporation that works especially with children and destitute families. We were preparing the summer-camp for children and I asked my friend Peter to help us. We felt the urgent need to share the gift of our experience with others. Thanks to this organization

Continued on last page

Thirsting for God

Read Psalm 42

When the psalmist says that his "soul" is thirsting for God, he does not conceive of a purely spiritual or intellectual thirst. The word "soul" suggests that this thirst comes from the depths of his being and takes possession of everything that is most alive in him. For anyone who feels this thirst, living without God is not living at all, because life here on earth is only full for such a person when they are praising God.

This psalm is the prayer of an exile who is far from the place where God's people meet, far from the Temple where the faithful will experience God and see his face. It is the memory of those collective celebrations that stimulates his thirst (v. 5). It is therefore intimately linked to the experience of all the others who have also sought God and sung his praises.

Can the language of this psalm become my own? Or is it too strong for me, since I do not have such familiarity with God? For in reality, what do I desire on this earth? Even if I have undergone a great many trials, it is hard for me to believe that I am in exile here below.

I cannot deny, however, that in each of the realities I may be longing for (a great love, a more just social order, etc.), I am inevitably sent back to another, more lasting reality. For everything that I ardently desire will never be able to quench my thirst. The depths of my being always long, in the end, for a communion that will never fail, a communion that is totally unwavering, a joy beyond all joy (Psalm 43.4).

This psalm can thus guide my prayer. But what recommends it for the present time, when everything seems arid?

The psalmist exhorts himself, "Hope in God" (v. 6, 12). This can be translated as: "Wait for God." Accept that your real thirst remains open. Do not fill it by satisfying desires that are within reach. As Jeremiah said, do not replace the wellspring of living water by "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (2:13). A human life is beautiful when it remains until the end in an open waiting that only God can fill.

"Wait for God, my soul. I will praise him still" (v. 6). That is the way forward. The day is coming when I will be able to sing once again. It is thus towards praise that I continue to direct my life. And in the meantime, I trust that God will not fail to order his grace to be with me throughout the day, while during the night a song coming from him will carry me onward like a prayer (v. 9).

What am I thirsting for (for my personal life, for the world, for the Church)? Are some desires more important than others? Which ones?

What does the term "thirst for God" mean for me? How can we desire something that is invisible and intangible?

The Heart

In all civilizations there is a correlation between
human faculties and the parts of the body. Surp
ingly, this match is not identical everywhere.
world of the Bible, in particular, is very diffe
from our own in this respect, something that in
tably leads to misunderstandings.

To the contemporary mind, the heart is virtu
synonymous with tender feelings such as affec
and compassion. A host of popular love songs wit
to this. In the Bible, however, such sentiments ar
cated lower in the body: the word for compass
rachamim, refers to the bowels (*racham* in the sing
means the womb). We feel and we love with our
lies, or with our gut, to put it more coarsely.

On the other hand the heart, for the bibl
mentality, is something just as important as
head is for us. It stands for the core of our bei
where all our faculties come together in unity.
an Italian writer puts it: "For the Hebrew of old
heart is like a king in battle; it remains at the cen
of decisions and rapid judgments." In that sense
represents the deepest identity of a human bein

First of all, the heart is the seat of intelligen
Better yet, of wisdom. When God asked Solom
at the beginning of his reign, what gift he wo
like to receive, the young king replied without h
tation, "Give your servant a listening heart to g
ern your people, to discern between good and e
(1 Kings 3:9). Our Bibles sometimes translate t
as "an understanding (or discerning) heart," I
true wisdom consists precisely in listening to G
and paying attention to what is around us.

The opposite of an intelligent and willing heart
hard heart, one that refuses to open itself to reality
in extreme cases, cannot even do so. The prototy
of this attitude is Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, w
does not grasp the meaning of the signs God acco
plishes right before his eyes. Elsewhere, such a he
is described as "fat, sluggish, insensible" (Isaiah 6:
Psalm 119:70), "stubborn" (Jeremiah 3:17 etc.),
"uncircumcised" (Jeremiah 9:25; Ezekiel 44: 7,9).

At the same time, in the heart are rooted the
cisions and commitments that people make. T

Christ Jesus, in your Gospel you assure us: I will never leave you all alone, I will send you the Holy Spirit to be a support and a comfort, to enable you to be in communion with God day after day.

MAY

DAILY READINGS

1 1 K 8:22-40
Sat Solomon prayed: Listen, Lord, forgive and act; deal with every person according to all they do, since you know their heart — you alone know the heart of everyone.

2 Jn 13:31-35
SUN Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

3 Is 62:1-5
Mon From the prophet Isaiah: For the sake of my people, I shall not keep silent. I shall not rest until her justice shines out like the breaking of day. And then all will see your justice, and you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.

4 1 Jn 3:14-20
Tue Let us not love just with words and in speech, but with actions and in truth.

5 Ph 4:4-7
Wed Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

6 Is 66:18-21
Thu The Lord says: I am coming to gather the people of every nation and language, and they will see my glory.

7 Ep 2:4-6
Fri Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins.

8 Lk 10:25-37
Sat Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" They answered him, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

9 Jn 14:22-26
SUN Jesus said: Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. A peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

10 Is 26:7-9
Mon My soul longs for you in the night, Lord, and deep within me, my spirit seeks you.

11 Ph 4:4-7
Tue Do not let anything worry you, but in every situation, by prayer with thanksgiving, let God know your desires.

12 Jn 20:11-18
Wed The Risen Christ said to Mary of Magdala: Go and find my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

13 Lk 24:46-53
Thu ASCENSION After Jesus' Ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem full of joy, and they were continually in the Temple praising God.

14 Mt 20:20-28
Fri Jesus said: Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.

15 Zp 3:14-18a
Sat Your God is with you. God will quiet you with his love and dance with joy for you.

16 Jn 17:11-21
SUN Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and the world may believe that you sent me.

17 Am 8:11
Mon The days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall send hunger upon the land; not hunger for food or thirst for water, but a hunger to hear the Word of God.

18 Rm 8:14-17
Tue Paul writes: You did not receive a spirit which makes you a slave to fear again; you received the spirit of adoption by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

19 Jr 1:4-8
Wed God said to Jeremiah: Go to everyone I send you to. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you.

20 1 Co 13:1-13
Thu Love is patient and kind. Love does not seek its own advantage, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.

21 Ps 105:1-5
Fri Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.

22 Ac 3:1-10
Sat Peter said to the crippled man, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

23 Jn 20:19-23
SUN PENTECOST The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

24 1 Co 12:4-11
Mon In each person the Holy Spirit manifests its action for the good of all.

25 Tt 3:4-7
Tue Through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, God has generously poured out on us the Holy Spirit, so that justified by his grace we may be heirs in hope of eternal life.

26 Ac 5:27-42
Wed Glad to have had the honour of suffering for the name of Christ, the first disciples continued to teach and proclaim the good news of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in people's homes.

27 Ac 2:1-21
Thu On the day of Pentecost, all the disciples were together. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages as the Spirit enabled them.

28 Heb 8:6-13
Fri The Lord says: Among my people, no one will need to teach their neighbour, saying, "Know the Lord!", for they shall all know me, from the smallest among them to the greatest.

29 Ac 2:42-47
Sat All the believers held everything in common. They sold their goods and possessions and shared the proceeds according to the needs of each person.

30 Jn 16:12-15
SUN Jesus said: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord but will say only what he has been told.

31 Is 12:1-6
Mon Sing of the Lord, for his works are great: make them known throughout the world. Cry out for joy, for God is among you in his greatness.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Holy Spirit, by your presence within us, you prepare us to perceive God's compassion and to understand that God can only give his love.

JUNE

DAILY READINGS

1 Na 1:7-8
Tue God is better than a fortress in time of distress; he recognises those who trust in him even when the flood rushes on.

2 Pr 23:15-19
Wed Let your heart remain constant in the adoration of God; for there is a future and your hope will not come to nothing.

3 Mk 14:12-26
Thu During the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them, saying: Take this; this is my body.

4 Lk 6:27-35
Fri Jesus said: Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

5 1 P 4:7-11
Sat If anyone speaks, they should do so as one speaking the very words of God; if anyone serves, let it be as one fulfilling God's service, so that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ.

6 1 Co 10:16-17
SUN Is not the bread which we break, communion in the body of Christ? Because there is only one bread, we who are many are one body.

7 Is 43:1-4a
Mon Thus says God who created you: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.

8 Rm 15:1-7,13
Tue St. Paul writes: We should not try to please ourselves, but consider what is good for our neighbours and so build up community.

9 Jr 20:7-9
Wed Jeremiah said: The word of the Lord has brought insult and derision upon me. And so I said to myself, "I shall not think about him, I shall no longer speak in his name." But there seemed to be a burning fire in my heart, which I could not contain.

10 Rm 8:26-27
Thu We do not know how to pray properly, but the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

11 1 P 4:7-11
Fri Peter writes: Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over many a sin.

12 Mt 12:14-21
Sat Jesus fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: My servant will not quarrel or cry out, he will not snuff out the smouldering wick. All the nations will put their hope in him.

13 Lk 7:36-50
SUN Jesus said to a woman, "Your sins are forgiven." Those who were present began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

14 Dt 32:8-11
Mon God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. God shields them and cares for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye.

15 Lk 12:22-31
Tue Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life?

16 Rv 22:1-9
Wed The servants of God will see him face to face and his name will be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again, and they will not need the light of a lamp or of the sun, because the Lord God will be shining upon them.

17 1 P 4:7-11
Thu Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

18 Si 27:30-28:7
Fri Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?

19 Si 2:1-11
Sat If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

20 Lk 9:18-24
SUN Jesus said: Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

21 Jr 1:4-8
Mon The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you.

22 Lk 1:67-79
Tue At John the Baptist's birth, Zechariah said: Blessed be God, who allows us to serve him without fear.

23 Jn 6:27-29
Wed The people asked Jesus, "What must we do to do God's work?" Jesus replied, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

24 Is 49:1-6
Thu St JOHN THE BAPTIST The Lord says: It is not enough for you to be my servant to restore my people. I shall make you a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach the furthest corners of the earth.

25 1 Co 1:4-9
Fri God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

26 Rm 15:7-13
Sat May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

27 Lk 9:57-62
SUN Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

28 Ps 84
Mon Happy are those who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

29 2 Tm 4:6-18
Tue SS PETER AND PAUL Paul writes: I have fought the good fight to the end. I have run the race to the finish. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give me.

30 Rm 10:11-13
Wed Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

JULY

DAILY READINGS

1 Ex 3:1-15
Thu The Lord says: I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, yes, I know their suffering and I have come down to rescue them.

2 Is 58:6-8
Fri If you break unjust chains to let the oppressed go free, if you share your food with the hungry and shelter the homeless, then your light will break forth like the dawn and your wound will be quickly healed.

3 Ep 2:13-22
Sat St THOMAS
In Christ, you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit.

4 Lk 10:1-9
SUN Jesus sent out his disciples saying: Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you, cure the sick who are there and say, "The kingdom of God is very near you."

5 Ps 9
Mon Those who know your name trust in you, Lord. For you never forsake those who seek you.

6 Jr 30:17-22
Tue The Lord says: I shall restore you to health and heal your wounds, The city shall be rebuilt and there will be thanksgiving and shouts of joy.

7 Mt 6:25-34
Wed Jesus said: Seek first God's kingdom and his justice, and all other things will be given you in addition.

8 Mk 8:27-35
Thu Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

9 1 Jn 1:8—2:2
Fri John writes: Jesus Christ is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only for ours, but for those of the whole world.

10 Lk 17:20-21
Sat Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

11 Lk 10:25-37
SUN Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.

12 1 Jn 4:7-11
Mon This is love: not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

13 Ps 86
Tue Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may revere you.

14 Ga 5:13-14
Wed You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self-indulgence but to serve one another in love.

15 1 Th 5:1-11
Thu You are children of light, children of the day. So let us not slumber but stay awake.

16 Ph 2:1-11
Fri Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

17 1 Jn 4:7-11
Sat Let us love one another, for love is of God and whoever loves is born of God and knows God.

18 Lk 10:38-42
SUN Jesus said to Martha: Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

19 Lv 26:3-13
Mon God says to his people: I shall fix my home among you and never reject you. I shall be your God and you will be my people.

20 Ga 2:19-20
Tue Paul writes: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

21 Ph 2:1-11
Wed Paul writes: Be of the same mind, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus himself.

22 Ba 5:1-9
Thu Leave behind your sadness and put on for ever the beauty of God's glory. For the Lord will guide you in joy, with the mercy and saving justice that come from him.

23 Col 3:12-17
Fri Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. The Lord has forgiven you, do the same in your turn.

24 2 Co 4:7-12
Sat We carry the treasure of the light of Christ in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

25 Lk 11:9-13
SUN Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

26 Rv 21:5-7
Mon God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

27 1 Jn 4:16-21
Tue God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

28 Ps 34
Wed The Lord is near to the broken-hearted. He saves those whose spirit is crushed.

29 Rm 12:14-18,21
Thu Do not repay evil with evil. Seek to do what is regarded as good by all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

30 Tt 3:4-7
Fri When the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any righteous things we had done, but because of his merciful love.

31 Rm 12:3-13
Sat Be joyful in your hope, steadfast in hardship, faithful in prayer. Be always ready to offer hospitality.

God of all tenderness, you come and make of us the humble of the Gospel. We are so eager to understand that the best within us is built up by means of a very simple trust, that even a child can achieve.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

AUGUST

DAILY READINGS

1 Lk 12:13-21
SUN Jesus said: Be on your guard against every kind of greed; for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions.

2 Heb 11:8-16
Mon By faith, Abraham answered God's call and set out for the land he was to inherit. And he set out without knowing where he was going.

3 Pr 4:23
Tue Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

4 Rv 3:20-22
Wed The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

5 1 Jn 3:11-16
Thu John writes: We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters.

6 2 P 1:19-21
Fri TRANSFIGURATION
You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

7 Mk 4:26-29
Sat Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while they sleep and when they are awake, the seed sprouts and grows, they do not know how.

8 Lk 12:32-34
SUN Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide for yourselves a treasure in heaven that will not fail. For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be.

9 Jr 31:1-9
Mon The Lord says: I will guide them to streams of water by a level path where they will not stumble, for I am a father to my people.

10 Ps 30
Tue You, Lord, have turned my mourning into dancing. So my heart will sing to you and not be silent. My God, I shall praise you for ever.

11 Ga 3:19-29
Wed Paul writes: You have all been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

12 1 Co 12:12-30
Thu Paul writes: You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.

13 Mk 2:15-17
Fri Jesus said: It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

14 Mk 4:26-32
Sat Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which is the smallest of seeds, but which, once it is sown, grows into the biggest plant of all.

15 Lk 1:39-45
SUN THE VIRGIN MARY
Elizabeth said to Mary: Blessed is she who believed that the promise the Lord made her would be fulfilled.

16 Rm 8:31-39
Mon Who could condemn us? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God, interceding for us.

17 Jn 10:11-18
Tue Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. My sheep will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

18 Is 30:15-18
Wed The Lord says: Your salvation is in returning and rest, your strength lies in calm and trust.

19 Lk 6:27-35
Thu Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

20 Ph 3:1-9
Fri Paul writes: In order that I may gain Christ I have accepted the loss of all other things.

21 Ps 46
Sat God is our refuge and strength, and an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be in turmoil.

22 Lk 13:22-30
SUN Jesus said: People will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God.

23 Ep 4:17-32
Mon Let yourselves be made new in the attitude of your minds and be clothed with the new self, which is created to be like God in justice and in holiness of the truth.

24 2 Co 3:16-18
Tue Paul writes: All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory.

25 Si 35:12-14,16-18 (35:14-22)
Wed God is utterly impartial. God never shows partiality to the detriment of the poor, but listens to the prayer of the one who is wronged.

26 Jn 15:15-17
Thu Jesus said to his disciples: I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know his master's business. I call you friends, because everything I have learnt from my Father I have made known to you.

27 Mk 14:32-41
Fri Jesus said: Watch and pray, so as not to fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but human nature is weak.

28 Mt 23:1-12
Sat Jesus said: The greatest among you will be your servant.

29 Lk 14:1-14
SUN Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

30 Ps 143
Mon I think of all your deeds, Lord, and stretch out my hands to you; my soul is thirsting for you like a parched land.

31 Mt 10:26-33
Tue Jesus said: Not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing. And even the very hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid.

Holy Spirit, you know our frailties, but you come to transfigure our hearts, so that our very darkness itself can become inner light.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

es it clear to us that the Bible does not separate
ning and understanding from the choices that fol-
from this. The heart has desires (Psalm 21:3) and
ests (Psalm 37.4); it makes many plans (Proverbs
1). It may follow the ways of the Lord (2 Chroni-
17:6) or become arrogant (2 Chronicles 26:16;
5; Ezekiel 28:2). The heart may turn away from
to run after other gods (1 Kings 11:2,4), for in-
ce by clinging to wealth (Psalm 62:11). Worse,
ay try to follow two paths at the same time, be-
ing "double" (Hosea 10:2) or, in a phrase dear
he Book of Proverbs, "twisted, perverse" (11:20;
8 etc.).

ltimately, was the prophet Jeremiah wrong in
ng: "The heart is devious above all things, and
ked; who can understand it?" (17:9)? After years
ministry, he concludes that sin is written on the
ion's heart (17:1) so that, humanly speaking, we
not expect anything to change. God replies to
pessimism that he is the one who searches hearts
:10, see 11:20; Psalm 7:10; Proverbs 17:3 etc.)
so he can change them. God is going to write his
w on the nation's heart (Jeremiah 31:33) so that it
l know and follow him (24:7). The prophet Ezek-
goes further with this prophecy by explaining that
d will remove the heart of stone from his people
replace it with a heart of flesh, one able to listen
God, quick to understand and follow his instruc-
ns, a unified heart (11:19; 36:26).

n fact, for the Bible the greatest obstacle to know-
g God is a heart that is "exalted" (Hosea 13:6) or
aughty" (Psalm 131:1). The opposite of this is a
art which is "broken" or "crushed", the result of an
itude of humility, or humiliation due to trials. Peo-
e with such hearts are especially dear to God. Far
m despising them (Psalm 51:19), the Lord is "close
the brokenhearted" (Psalm 34:19; cf. Isaiah 57:15)
"bind up" (Isaiah 61:1) or "heal" (Psalm 147:3)
eir wounds. He turns them into people who are
re of heart (Psalm 51:12), able to stand before God
salm 24:4) or, as Jesus says, to see him (Matthew
8). A transparent heart can be recognized because it
erflows with joy: "Let the hearts that seek the Lord
joice.... In him, our hearts find joy" (Psalm 105:3;
:21 cf. 16:9; 19:9). This happiness in God is not a
ere emotion, but rather the sign of a life that pen-
rates our whole being and transforms it from top to
ttom.

How can we discern God's voice within us?

Discernment is indeed required to hear more clearly the voice of a God who, according to biblical revelation, calls everyone to "remain in his love" (John 15:9) and to love him "with all their heart, with all their soul and all their mind" (Matthew 22:37). Two inward obstacles risk making God's voice almost inaudible: the image we have of ourselves and the image we have of God.

Human beings are hard put to believe themselves worthy of being loved by God, for the discovery of their inner darkness and their aggressive, sexual or other impulses often fosters guilt feelings and a negative self-image. The unconscious projection of our human way of looking on God's way of looking leads us to believe that God cannot really love us. But "even if our heart were to condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows everything" (1 John 3:20). God knows that an aggressive attitude often conceals the pain of feeling unloved, and behind the intensity of desires lies a longing for the fullness of love. Therefore, in the image of Christ, God wants to heal the secret wounds of each person and respond to their deepest thirst. Realizing this is already a way of discerning, in the steps of the prophet Jeremiah, the voice of God whispering deep within us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Humans also find it hard to believe they are capable of loving God, or even to consider that God wants to be loved by them. And yet, this expectation of God's is fully explicit: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Do we realize that this request witnesses indirectly to our ability to love God, for otherwise God never would have made it? Do we realize that the first thing God asks us is not to undertake some specific work, still less to follow a harsh morality, but to love him with all our being? Any sincere request for love has something utterly astonishing about it. And this request of God's overturns the way we represent his mysterious Divine Presence and the attitude we adopt towards him, in the image of a woman or a man who, discovering the great longing of the person they love, wants more than ever to offer him or her a love of value.

Letting ourselves be loved by God and learning to love him also means no longer being inhibited by simplistic images of God and opening ourselves up to the multiple facets of his love, discernible in the love of a father (Psalm 103:13), a mother (Isaiah 66:13), a husband (Hosea 2:19), a wife (Wisdom 8:2), a brother (Hebrews 2:11), a sister (Proverbs 7:4), a male (John 15:15), or female friend (Wisdom 1:6). The desire will be all the greater to respond to this voice of God, who calls everyone to enter at once into a reciprocal love that has no end.

we could give our time and life experience through different activities for the young, such as summer-camp, trips, sport events, common Masses, sharing-groups and other things. Working there, we still have to learn how to be "one body" as Jesus Christ invites us to be. It is not always easy, because even when people of good will meet to do something good, the temptation to be the best arises and tries to divide us. For us it's like the trial that the apostles had to go through: they wanted to be closer to Jesus, but at the same time each wanted to be the best one. We are still learning that we are one body and each one of us has their own role with their own talents, and none of us is bigger than the others.

Every day, we meet with children who are growing up in incomplete families or in families with hard circumstances: illnesses, alcoholism or parents' disinterest. They need someone to spend time with them, to tell them they are important, beautiful and unique as human beings. They are searching for love and the meaning of life, and we are trying to help them find it. It's a great mystery for us that the words and little acts we accomplish are changing their lives. We never force them to accept God. We just try to show them God through our lives, to show them the door which is there in spite of our imperfections. We would also like to encourage other young people to make a commitment and live for others. So if they are interested in joining our little organization, we give them as much trust as our elders gave us a few years ago

Besides this, we are slowly preparing a further project that might become a life-project as well. We want to create a community of people who could live together and help children suffering from cancer; they would give the children a new view of their situation and opportunities for hope. We hope to make it a place for young people where they could meet to reflect on faith and get to know God more personally.

Sometimes a gap widens between knowledge in the domain of faith and that acquired in other areas. A faith that remains on the level of phrases learned during childhood will find it hard to face the questions of adulthood. (*Letter from China*)

Claire, 24 years old, explains why she chose to work in a theology institute:

What drove me and still drives me today is the desire to discover the great mystery of a God who gives himself. In the case of theology, studying involves letting ourselves be overwhelmed by God himself, the Triune God who cannot be defined by our own languages. God is far beyond all the ideas, beliefs, and representations that we can have of him.... What has been formulated by theologians, starting from Scripture and from the tradition of the Church, exists only to dare provide a rough draft of a portrait... but God remains elusive. Their expressions help me better to understand the invitation to be loved and to love. I must first love myself.... Then love "each neighbor" that I meet, "each neighbor" entrusted to me, then the Church of Christ, then the society in which I live, and finally it is all humanity that Christ calls me to love. The important thing for me is to deepen my capacity for openness to others, my ability to give myself to another, to the Wholly Other.

If I thirst for theology, that is also because it helps me understand myself! Far from imprisoning God in concepts, limiting the response of faith only to intellectual reflection, or restraining prayer, because of what theology teaches me I can nourish and unify my life, and thereby seek to bring words and actions into harmony. Bringing into balance, therefore, what-I-believe and the understanding of what-I-believe. Not so long ago, the formulation of that-in-which-I-believe was like a heap of vague sentences, reflecting my own misunderstanding! Talking about God quickly destabilized me, and so did university life as well: my years of study sharpened my ability to analyze and criticize, so that faith took a hit as well! It found it was almost becoming obsolete.... It stands to reason that, if I keep a door open to faith with the keys of a teenager, as a university student I would have trouble entering! My two worlds were moving away from each other. Between my two "worlds" a bridge was lacking!

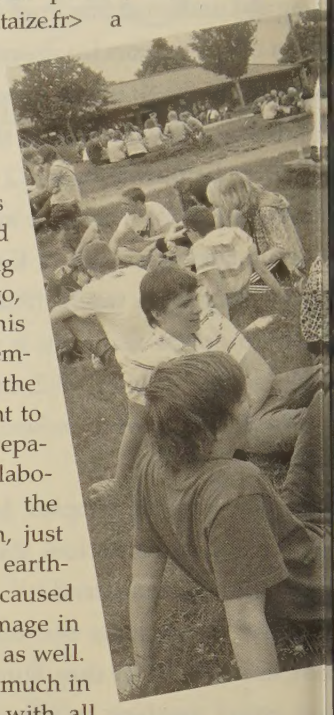
Once the dynamic of searching was triggered, then the desire to understand sprouted and grew, and understanding led to questioning, and to calling things into question. And studying is sometimes very dry... it involves crossing deserts. However, in the desert we know that what matters is not having arrived, but the road taken! Then the desire to understand better is awakened, in order to express things better in words. To express in words, but mostly by one's life. To say that the mystery that we are is revealed in Christ: "We are of the same nature as him, humanized by deification, deified by humanization: we are changing, we are in God!" as one of the professors of the Institute likes to repeat.

HAITI AND CHILE

Echoing a suggestion made by a youth from Haiti, the Taizé Community invites everyone who is able to

pray for the people of Haiti on the 12th of each month

for 12 months, following the earthquake of January 12. At the beginning of each month, we will publish on our website <www.taize.fr> a proposed prayer that can be used that day.



At Poznan, Brother Alois announced a meeting in Santiago, Chile, for this coming December. Two of the brothers went to begin the preparation in collaboration with the local Church, just before the earthquake that caused so much damage in that country as well. We are very much in communion with all those who are suffering at the present time in Chile.

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription
Ordinary subscription: 6 (France 4,5) Euros
Supporting subscription: 10 or 20 Euros

Means of payment:
by **credit card** Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue: send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, and say what sum in Euros you wish to transfer.
by **international Giro transfer** in Euros addressed to: Lettre de Taizé. IBAN: FR16 2004 1010 0700 6144 6M03 871, BIC: PSSTFRPPLYO.
by **cheque** in Euros to Lettre de Taizé, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France, made payable through Société Générale.

In certain countries it is possible to pay within the country:
Australia: $12 - Letter from Taizé, Patricia Ho, P.O. Box 694, West Ryde 1685 NSW. **Canada**: $10 Letter from Taizé, c/o Lesley Santiago, 145 College Circle, Ottawa, Ontario, K1K 4S1.
New Zealand: $15 - c/o Jenny Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, 6012 Wilton, Wellington. **UK**: £4.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Nick and Jane SHIELDS, 42 Blenheim Road, St Johns, WAKEFIELD, W. Yorkshire WF1 3JZ. **USA**: $7 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Bruder, P.O. Box 1954, Lenox, MA 01240.
For Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Asia: The Letter from Taizé can also be obtained in the following Asian countries. Contributions towards the cost of photocopying and postage will be most welcome. **Bangladesh**: Letter from Taizé, P O Box 48, H.P.O. 2200, Mymensingh. **Cambodia**: Fr. Sri Pramong Virachai, BP 123 Phnom Penh. **East Timor**:CP 299,Dili **Hong Kong**: Ingrid Chan, Flat H, 14/F, Tower 125, 11 Po Yan Street, Sheung Wan. **India**: Letter from Taizé, c/o Sr Kochu, FMM, Stella Maris College, 17, Cathedral Road, Chennai 600 086. **Indonesia**: Sister Be Kien Nio, Biarawati Ursulin, Jln Anggrek 60, Bandung 40114. **Japan**: Isao Uematsu, c/o Yoda, 6-43-5 Shimoshakujii, Nerima-ku, Tokyo 177-0042. **Korea**: English edition. Ordinary Subscription: 2,000 Supporting Subscription: 4,000 to: Letter from Taizé, c/o Hwa Gok Dong 105-51, Kang Seo Ku, Seoul 157-010. **Malaysia**: Georgina Wong, N° 31 Jalan Wan Alwi 6A, Lihang 93750 Kuching, Sarawak. **Myanmar**: Youth Commission, CBCM, 292A Pyi Road, Sanchaung PO, Yangon 1111. **Pakistan**: Yaqub Sadeq, Catholic Church, Toba Tek Singh. **Philippines**: Letter from Taizé, c/o 28 San Antonio Street, San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City. **Singapore**: Angela Lee, 79 King's Road, 268141. **Sri Lanka**: Martin Costa, 31 Major Lalaka Fernando Mawatha, Kapuwatte Ja-Ela. **Taiwan**: Anna Tang, Aurora Center, N° 9, Lane 71, Hang Chow S. Road, Sec. 1, Taipei, ROC. **Thailand**: CYO, 122/6-7 Soi Naksuwan, Nonsee Road, Yannawa, Bangkok 10120.

Correspondence: Letter from Taizé,
Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France
e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr
News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge:
www.taize.fr/taizenews.php

Directeur de publication : A. Trochard, Édition : Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France, CPPAP n° 0110K79608 - Impression : Comimpress, 01750 Replonges, France - DL 1112